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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1922

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1713

RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1587

RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1717

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0354

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0983

RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1346

RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1774

RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4192

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1545

RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2207

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0838

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RHMFISS/Joint Staff WASHDC

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1934

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//

RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000869

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

USAID FOR L.DOBINS AND E. LOKEN

ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV ELAB ZI

SUBJECT: LABOR STAYAWAY A DAMP SQUIB

REF: HARARE 00857

Summary

¶11. (U) Massive unemployment, fear of job loss, government intimidation, and arrests combined to produce a meager response from workers to a two-day countrywide "stay-away" called by ZCTU for September 19 - 20. In the past week, security agents hauled in labor leaders for interrogations, arrested organizers for handing out flyers, and visited businesses to intimidate workers. During the stay-away, the commercial and industrial areas of Harare and Bulawayo, the country's second largest city, were business as usual. End Summary.

Just Not Worth the Risk

¶12. (U) The two-day stay-away (reftel) called by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) attracted a meager response from workers throughout the country. Primary reasons for the poor showing were the lack of actual workers in the formal sector in a time of massive unemployment and reluctance of those still working to risk their jobs. Government intimidation and fear also played a part. During the stay-away, the commercial and industrial areas of Harare and Bulawayo, the country's second largest city, were business as usual. There were reports that some workers reported to their jobs, but did not actually work.

¶3. (U) An economist at the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI) told us that worker support for the stay-away was lacking primarily due to harsh economic conditions. The few Zimbabweans working in formal sector were reluctant to participate in any labor action and risked losing their jobs. Additionally, with ongoing widespread shortages of basic commodities, many workers depended on the free meal they receive at the company cantina as their only sustenance.

Police Round-up Leaders and Arrest Organizers

¶4. (U) Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) reported that at least 10 ZCTU officials were arrested and detained before the stay-away -- all have since been released. In addition to the ZCTU leaders interrogated in Harare, Gweru, Bulawayo, and Masvigo during the past week, police on September 18 visited the home of ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo to pick him up for questioning. Matombo was not home at the time, so police arrested his brother and house staff in order to coerce them to reveal his whereabouts. They have all since been released.

¶5. (U) Additionally, three ZCTU organizers arrested on September 15 for handing out flyers in the industrial area of Harare were released on remand on September 20. The organizers face charges of criminal nuisance under the Criminal Act and must report back to court on October 3. ZLHR lawyer Rangu Nyamurundira told us that while the organizers were not assaulted during arrest, police at Mbare

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Police Station in Harare did beat them while they were in custody. Another person arrested along with the organizers for merely picking up and reading one of the flyers was also released on September 20.

Comment -- Is Labor Still A Player?

¶6. (SBU) Until recently, the labor movement has been a major player in Zimbabwe politics. The main opposition MDC party was born out of the labor movement in late 1999, and many of its leaders, including anti-Senate MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai, were once leaders of the ZCTU. However, poor

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showings in the past several labor actions organized by the ZCTU call into question the continued political relevance of the labor movement and its importance as a pillar of the opposition. End Comment.
RAYNOR